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The Limited Edition

In the early 1930s gallerist Julien Levy had a brilliant idea: to sell film prints as art objects. Levy is primarily known as the New York dealer who represented the surrealists; like them he had a passion for cinema and for challenging what counted as an artistic medium. He was a powerful advocate for the filmic experiments of artists, hosting the first American screening of Buñuel's *Un chien andalou* (1929) on November 17, 1932. He exhibited works such as Joseph Cornell's *Rose Hobart* (1936) and Marcel Duchamp's *Anemic Cinema* (1926). In 1932–33 he served as the president of the Film Society of New York, a not-for-profit organization that aimed to show films that might be too unconventional to attract a broad public. Taken by this enthusiasm for cinema, Levy wrote in his memoirs, "As part of my program to promote camera work as an art I hoped to be able to sell short films in limited editions to collectors."¹ He saw this model of sale as essential to the valorization of cinema as an artistic medium: "I had formed a collection of films reprinted on 16 mm stock, with two purposes in mind: films conceived by such important painters as Duchamp, Leger, or Dali should command much the same value as a canvas from their hand, and if a collector's market could be organized, I thought to persuade other painters to experiment in this medium."² Levy tried to promote the venture, but there is no record that he ever succeeded in selling a single print.³

Levy's initiative may be understood as participating in two seemingly contradictory impulses that marked the era: first, the desire to claim for cinema the status of art, something associated with French impressionist film theorists and filmmakers, as well as burgeoning film society movements in France and the United States; second, the desire to use cinema, with its basis in mechanical reproducibility and mass culture, to challenge the institution of art, something one might align with the filmmaking activities of the historical avant-garde. Steven Watson describes Levy as a "Harvard modernist," an individual who, like Alfred Barr Jr., "saw the traditional art hierarchy—which granted museum status only to painting and sculpture—as insufficient and inaccurate."⁴ Though Levy's interest in cinema perhaps best embodies his desire to confound high and low and to rethink the status of the art object, his questioning of the hegemony of painting and sculpture extended beyond his involvement in avant-garde film. He sold books and periodicals, as well as found tchotchkes he called "kinack kinacks."⁵ Levy was keenly interested in the sale of photographic prints, but such sales never generated enough income to keep his gallery afloat; this duty fell to the tried-and-true medium of painting.⁶ One might think that in the middle of the Great Depression a market would emerge for photography as a cheaper alternative to unique works of art, but hard economic times are often accompanied by risk aversion, and banking on the collectability of photography as art in the early 1930s was a risk indeed. Given the lukewarm reception collectors gave Levy's photographic offerings, the notion that there might be a market for limited-edition film prints seems unthinkable. After all, like a photograph, film problematizes the notion that the work of art is founded in uniqueness, but unlike a photograph, a film print cannot simply be displayed on a wall.

The situation appears considerably different today. Over the last two decades, as the popularity of film and video in contemporary art has soared, the limited edition has finally proved itself as not only a viable model of distribution but perhaps *the* model of distribution in artists' moving image. It represents a radical change in the sale of film and video when compared with uneditioned tapes and prints.⁷ Today, films and videos are regularly sold as art objects, most often in an edition of three or four plus artist's proofs.⁸ Although still nowhere near the salability of more traditional art objects, film and video are attaining a new market viability that has drastically changed the ways in which moving image art is bought,

sold, valued, and seen. Though most editions are sold to institutions, a growing private collectors' market exists. In 2005 the *New York Times* profiled San Francisco collectors Pam and Dick Kramlich, who have numerous works installed in their home: "As eccentric as the Kramlichs' domestic situation may seem today, 10 years ago it would have been a downright oddity. . . . But now, video art is widely bought and exhibited by collectors and museums alike, and there are those who say flat screens may soon be as common on household walls as picture frames."⁹ The moving image is now collected like painting, and central to this enterprise is the artificial imposition of scarcity effected by editioning.

The widespread espousal of the limited-edition model represents a reining in of the inherent reproducibility of the moving image and its wholesale recuperation into the symbolic economy it once compromised, that of the unique work of art. Authenticity—a concept that had never mattered much to film and video—becomes paramount. Though authenticity has historically been defined against the exchange principle, paradoxically it is precisely the authenticity attained through the rarefaction of the limited edition that has enabled the moving image to circulate on the art market. Put differently, here authenticity is not opposed to the exchange principle but in fact its precondition, something that throws into crisis authenticity's supposed residence outside an economy of fungibility. Of course, the precise variety of authenticity operative in the limited edition is far from the romantic concept of authenticity as an antitechnological, premodern wholeness. Rather, it is a form of authenticity that is philosophically false yet enables the generation of market value. For some this denial of reproducibility represents a betrayal of the specific qualities of film and video and the utopian hopes invested in them; for others it represents the only way they will be taken seriously as artistic media and the most viable economic model to support the livelihood of artists and filmmakers.

When purchasing a video edition, the collector will usually receive an archival master (once Digital Beta, but increasingly an uncompressed file format), exhibition copies in a current format, digital files, a signed and numbered certificate of authenticity, and a contract specifying the rights to exhibition, duplication, and format shifting. In the case of film the collector will usually acquire a master in the form of an internegative, a number of prints, a digital preview copy of the work, a signed and numbered certificate of authenticity, and a contract specifying the rights to

exhibition, duplication, and format shifting. In some cases the technological support required to display the work might be included as a part of the edition, though such a practice is relatively rare. Editions sometimes also include ancillary materials such as still photographs or sculptural packaging, included to endow the work with objecthood, but more commonly such objects (when they do exist) are sold separately from the edition.¹⁰ When one buys an edition, one purchases a rather curious combination of rights, content, and technical support, the specifics of which are all closely regulated by the contracts accompanying the acquisition. This makes the accession of film or video into a museum collection distinctly more complicated than would be the case with more traditional artworks. Although the moving image does possess a kind of objecthood, it is crucial to recognize that what is for sale is less this object per se than a set of permissions, privileges, and responsibilities concerning the exhibition and guardianship of a given work over time. This was made especially clear in the case of Christian Marclay's *The Clock* (2010). Because of its high price and the great demand for the work, some editions were sold to coacquiring institutions; these institutions (such as the National Gallery of Canada and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) would both receive the hardware for the installation, but only one would be allowed to exhibit the work at a given time.

Between Levy's inaugural attempt to sell film prints and the recent embrace of the limited edition, there have been a host of efforts to sell film and video as art objects. This chapter will examine the roots of the limited edition in late nineteenth-century printmaking and bronze sculpture before tracing its persistent rearticulation in relation to film and video throughout the twentieth century. The notion of selling film and video as limited editions is proposed repeatedly but fails again and again until the 1990s, when it finally begins to meet with some success. This chapter will account for this important shift in the distribution and valorization of the moving image in art, while exploring both the benefits of this model and the criticisms it has provoked. Often, scholarly discourse eschews questions concerning the sale and pricing of art, with such subjects presumably thought to be vulgar and tasteless, a disavowed part of a business that never wants to recognize itself as such. Serious art magazines such as *Frieze* and *Artforum* rarely discuss the art market. But as the following pages will show, these practices in fact have an intimate relationship to

the symbolic value attached to a given art object, as well as a direct impact on how that object may be collected and archived. As Isabelle Graw has noted, the notion that there is a strict separation between the lofty ideals of art and the more earthly concerns of the market is patently false, though often assumed.¹¹ Although not isomorphic, the financial valorization of art and the cultural valorization of art are inextricably tied. The discipline of cinema studies, whether dealing with experimental film or a blockbuster megaproduction, has consistently embraced questions concerning the economics of circulation in a manner that has largely eluded contemporary art history.¹² When dealing with an interdisciplinary object like artists' moving image, it is imperative that one follows the enthusiasm of the former rather than the reticence of the latter. Understanding editioning is key to making sense of the past, present, and future of artists' moving image and to parsing the relationship between practices that exist within the art market and those that exist on its periphery or in opposition to it.

Origins

The practice of escalating the price of the art object and inciting consumer desire through the artificial cultivation of rarity existed long before the moving image was used in an art context, but its appearance in the form known today is curiously contemporaneous with the invention of cinema. Artists had, of course, sold prints for centuries, but an economy of scarcity was not in force. When Albrecht Dürer abandoned painting for engraving, he explained his attraction to the reproducible medium as residing in its "economic expediency," but such financial considerations had to do with augmenting rather than restricting the number of copies the artist could produce. Dürer did not offer his works as numbered editions, and they were copied throughout Europe, both in their original medium and also as paintings, reliefs, and tapestries. Though such an indifference to one's intellectual property might seem strange to contemporary minds, as Edwin Panofsky put it, "The postulate of originality—and, conversely, the condemnation of plagiarism—is a fairly modern phenomenon which presupposes the interpretation of art and other intellectual achievements as a matter of individual 'genius.'"¹³

As early as the mid-eighteenth century, engravers began to announce that they were limiting the number of prints they would produce, though such prints were neither signed nor numbered.¹⁴ Throughout most of the nineteenth century, reproducible artworks were issued in unlimited editions. As Élisabeth Lebon notes in her study of French bronze foundries, at this time “the impulse was not to limit production—on the contrary. Fairly early in the century, some founders simply tried to number their casts without limiting how many could be made, something that can only be understood as an attempt to better manage production.”¹⁵ When clients became reluctant to purchase a bronze with a high number stamped on it, the initial move was not to restrict the size of the edition but to eliminate numeration altogether.¹⁶ Artistic production at this time inhabited what Rosalind Krauss has termed an “ethos of reproduction.”¹⁷

Changes, however, were afoot. By the second half of the nineteenth century, with an increasingly wealthy bourgeoisie and a proliferation of images resulting from the invention of photography, the value of originality was on the rise. Michel Melot has identified the “foundation stone of the marketing of the modern print” as residing in Jean-François Millet’s etching *Departure for Work* (1863), produced for a group of collectors, the Société des Dix.¹⁸ Collector Alfred Sensier wrote Millet a letter, asking him to write on each of the first edition of ten prints, “1st state. M. Jules Niel, November 1863, J. F. Millet.” There was no guarantee that no further prints would be made, but such an inscription nonetheless served to mark out the prints belonging to the first edition as more originary and hence more valuable than what might come later. Despite this seeming interest in rarefaction, when one collector, Philippe Burty, insisted that the plate be destroyed, Sensier wrote in return, “I must inform you that nine of the subscribers are of an entirely different opinion: they do not want the plate to be destroyed.”¹⁹ In 1869 Millet was once again confronted with a request to destroy the printing plate, this time of his *Spinner from the Auvergne* (1869), which was to be included in a book Burty was assembling that would be limited to 350 copies. On January 15, 1869, Millet wrote to Sensier: “I gave my consent to the destruction of the plate in spite of my wish to hold on to it. . . . Between ourselves, I find this destruction of plates excessively brutal and barbarous. I am not competent enough at business to understand what the outcome is supposed to be, but I do know that even if Rembrandt and Ostade had made each one of these plates they would still be annihilated. That’s enough about all that.”²⁰

Millet's experiences with Burty are evidence of a changing attitude toward rarity and reproducibility, one that can be traced to the appearance of photography. Photography threatened to pull fine art prints down into the degraded status of mere copies in a climate that increasingly privileged uniqueness. As a response printmakers turned to a number of strategies, often deployed in tandem, to differentiate their work from such reproductions. Significantly, several bear striking resemblance to those used today in the sale of the moving image on the art market: printmakers could limit the size of the edition, destroy the plates, use outmoded techniques, or number or sign each print. The categories of art and originality were demarcated by double recourse to artisanal techniques and contractual means. Publications such as André Marty's *L'estampe originale* (1893) championed the notion of the *belle épreuve*, or one-of-a-kind print. This concept privileged the originality and uniqueness of the print, even if the artist was working with a reproducible medium. It was less as a financial consideration than a matter of authorship and artistic status, but one is not strictly separable from the other. As Melot has put it so aptly: "There is no criterion of quality without a criterion of quantity."²¹

Phillip Dennis Cates writes, "By 1889, with the organization of the Société des peintres-graveurs (Society of Painters-Printmakers), the limited-edition, signed, and numbered print became the standard for guaranteeing the artistic status of a print, and thus, its commercial value."²² The same development occurred in bronze sculpture at roughly the same time. According to Walter Benjamin, the advent of mechanical reproducibility threatened an economy of art founded in aura and uniqueness. With the invention of photography and cinema, cult value gave way to exhibition value, and the work of art was made possessable through the proxy of its reproduction. The history of bronze editions and fine art prints suggests a different, more dialectical narrative: there is a shift from an unrestricted number of copies to a largely artificial imposition of scarcity precisely as the reproduction of images and goods attained a new facility. Rather than a preexisting value that was compromised by reproducibility, authenticity and originality were produced by it. Amid the new threat of the copy, of endlessly reproducible images, these qualities took on the status that they retain today, even after decades of vanguardist assaults on their hegemony. In a world of surfeit, rarity triumphs. Or, in Krauss's words, the copy is nothing other than "the *underlying condition of the original*."²³

The limited edition was, then, a late nineteenth-century invention that rescued compound arts such as lithography and bronze sculpture from succumbing to the degraded status of mere copies in a new economy of desire. Henceforth, the number of objects produced would be restricted to generate an aura of quasi uniqueness. In the case of the compound arts, value was assured by what Jean Chatelain has called “systematic rarefaction”;²⁴ although artificial, this scarcity possesses a true market agency, particularly as it became convention through consensus of the actors involved. In a striking prefiguration of later attempts to sell film and video as art objects by drawing on the artist’s established reputation in more traditional artistic media, in the first decade of the twentieth century Ambroise Vollard began to sell limited-edition engravings made by painters such as Cézanne and Munch. These prints participated in the new culture of reproducibility by extending high art into the domain of bourgeois accessibility. But they did so while reconfirming the values of rarity and authenticity produced as a reaction to this culture of consumption by insisting on the limited availability of prints. In a second parallel between Vollard’s moment and our own, just as the tectonic realignment of image circulation proper to the late nineteenth century spawned rearguard efforts to reconstruct uniqueness, the new mobility of images following digitization of media in the 1990s would result in the countermovement of restricting the circulation of moving image artworks by instituting the limited edition as the market standard.

In the early twentieth century, however, the limited edition was not simply an issue of rarity for rarity’s sake. Until the passage of a French law in 1968 that would restrict bronze casting to an edition of eight plus four artist’s proofs, the most frequent size for bronze editions in France was six, something that Lebon speculates is in all likelihood linked to the lifespan of the gelatin mold.²⁵ In the case of lithographs, as well, limiting the edition size could be justified as guarding against the possibility of degraded prints. In its initial employment, then, the “systematic rarefaction” of the limited edition was both a question of fabricating the status of a quasi original *and* a means of ensuring quality control—which, of course, would have been increasingly important when dealing with the augmented prices that resulted from limiting the size of the edition. Here one encounters a crucial difference from the moving image, which can produce many more copies—in the case of digital video an infinite number—before image

degradation becomes a concern. In bronze sculpture and certain printing processes editioning finds partial motivation in the material limitations of the media involved; in the case of the moving image it goes against what is the most potentially revolutionary attribute of its material base. Nevertheless, in another echo from the turn of one century to another, the rhetoric of ensuring the quality of the work quite interestingly reappears, *mutatis mutandis*, in the 1990s as a justification for the necessity of restricting moving image art to a limited-edition model of sale: major galleries insist that editioning is necessary to ensure that a given work will not be viewed in unfavorable circumstances, such as on a laptop screen or in a highly compressed digital file format. In a span of roughly one hundred years the very media that exemplified the supreme threat and radical promise of the copy would be, through a series of expectations and agreements, transformed into *de facto* originals.

Collectors and Cooperatives

In 1957, a year before making his first film, *A MOVIE* (1958), Bruce Conner wrote a letter to his gallerist, Charles Alan: “New horizons, Unexplored territory. There is a potential patron of The Experimental Film. He hasn’t been touched. I don’t mean [a] patron who finances a film. Someone who buys a ‘print’ of a film. People can be found who will purchase experimental films as they would a print or a painting. They have to know that these films can be considered as valid works of art as well as paintings and sculptures and musics [*sic*] and dances etc. This means apart from the mass public phenomena called movies.”²⁶ Resurrecting Levy’s dream of a model of film distribution that would be more aligned with the realm of fine art than industrial cinema, Conner put into writing his plans for the sale of such films before even having one ready to offer to collectors. The Alan Gallery, however, declined to finance the venture. Once more, a proposition to sell prints as art objects—though not specifically as limited editions—remained unrealized.

While this failure might be due in part to the lack of an established market for the sale of film as an art object, it is also linked to the absence of a provision to limit the number of prints that would be available and to the proposition that the collector would purchase a single print for exhibition

rather than a master format (such as an internegative or interpositive) from which prints could be made. Celluloid film is an eminently fragile material, inescapably subject to wear and the possibility of damage at each projection. What motivation would a collector have to purchase an artwork that would degrade each time it was exhibited, particularly one that might be owned by countless others? The model of the limited edition that emerged in the 1990s would provide solutions to both of these problems by restricting the number of certified copies and providing collectors with a master format from which to make exhibition copies. Nonetheless, the notion that a viable distribution model for experimental film could be found in selling prints to private collectors was not something that Conner immediately abandoned. In his 1963 application for a Ford Foundation grant he reiterated his conviction: "I do not rent my films. I sell prints. I conceive of them as an engraver might conceive of an etching and then sell copies of it in a gallery. . . . I consider film distribution, as it is now, to be antagonistic to artistic process."²⁷

As I noted in chapter 2, Conner believed that his films were best suited to repeat viewings in a domestic setting so that the viewer might discover something new each time. The 8 mm reduction print provided one avenue of accomplishing this, the art market another. There is, though, an element of disingenuousness present in the statement that Conner did not rent but rather sold prints. Instead of any private collectors' market, whether editioned or uneditioned, rentals from distributors such as Cinema 16, the Museum of Modern Art, the Film-Makers' Cooperative, and later Canyon Cinema constituted the primary method of circulation for Conner's films from the time they were produced until close to his death. His statements on the possibility of selling prints as art objects nevertheless serve as a reminder of an untaken path of experimental film history—for one of the primary characteristics that distinguishes experimental film from artists' moving image is the former's commitment to a rental model of distribution rather than a limited-edition model of sale.

The origins of experimental film's rental model are found in the late 1940s. As an increasing number of individuals began to make what would come to be known as avant-garde or experimental films, it became necessary to build distribution networks to support this fledgling field of practice. Amos Vogel's Cinema 16—which took on *A MOVIE* immediately after its release—was founded in 1947 and became the first major distributor of

contemporary experimental film in the United States. At a time when film was by no means an accepted medium of institutionalized artistic practice, the channels of distribution and exhibition developed to nurture the emerging art were by necessity outside of the gallery context. Rather than imitating the art world and selling prints as collectible objects, Cinema 16's adoption of a rental model based on a per-screening fee mimicked both commercial film distribution and an organization with which it had much more in common: the circulating film library established at the Museum of Modern Art in 1935.

Cinema 16 served as a crucial precursor for the establishment of artist-run organizations such as the New York Film-Makers' Cooperative (1962), the London Film-Makers' Co-operative (1966), and Canyon Cinema (1967, of which Conner was a cofounder), which would support experimental film as a distinct mode of production that continues to this day. Central to the founding ethos of the cooperative model was an emphasis on access and integrity. Such organizations charge a per-screening rental fee, determined largely by the format and length of the work. Though such fees vary, at the time of this writing, an average fee at Canyon Cinema is between \$3 and \$5 per minute of projected 16 mm film, plus shipping charges. Institutional sales sometimes occur but constitute a small fraction of overall income and are made for the life of the print only, meaning that the print is not to be duplicated in any way and that the sale contains no provision for the replacement of damaged prints.²⁸ LUX has a set fee schedule for theatrical screenings, with works up to 30 minutes long renting for £50, 30–59 minutes for £120, 60–119 minutes for £180, and 120 minutes or more for £250, but artists are free to set their own, higher fees if desired. These fees are split according to a preexisting agreement between the distributor and the filmmaker.²⁹ In the case of gallery-based exhibition, bespoke arrangements are made that depart from pricing used for the per-screening model. On the whole the result of experimental cinema's belief in the democratizing status of the film medium was severe financial difficulty. While this poverty of experimental cinema in some sense resonates with its countercultural affiliations, it is important not to romanticize it: most filmmakers were very concerned with being able to make a living, turning to other forms of employment, such as teaching, to supplement the meager income gleaned from rental receipts.

While public exhibition was by far the dominant context for the viewing of experimental film, initiatives to develop a private sale market did exist. Although both turn cinema into a form of privately owned property, the notion of offering reduction prints for sale to home viewers was very different from the artificial rarefaction of the limited edition in that the former proposed to exploit the possibilities of reproduction inherent in the film medium to reach new audiences. Like proponents of the reduction print, the Fluxus artists turned to film precisely for its capacity for circulation and reproduction: issuing unlimited film editions as a part of the Fluxboxes was a way to intervene in the symbolic economy of the work of art, to refuse the notion of the original in favor of the industrially produced multiple. Fluxfilms were available for sale both on their own and as a part of the Fluxboxes; in 1965, for example, Nam June Paik's *Zen for Film* (1964–66) was sold on its own as a loop in a small plastic box for \$3 (\$22.73 in 2015 dollars) or as a part of a Fluxkit for \$100 (\$757.58 in 2015).³⁰ In addition to these initiatives Fluxfilms films were shown at festivals and deposited with the Film-Makers' Cooperative in New York City for rental distribution.

At this time the moving image provided a way to pursue the same dematerialization of the art object that was occurring in performance, happenings, and conceptual practice alike. Raymonde Moulin has noted that the contestation of the singular rarity of the work of art in the twentieth century played out between two poles: the nothing and the multiple.³¹ In its lack of objecthood, performance embodies the nothing, while the work of Fluxus artists may be thought of as exemplary of the multiple. Notably, the moving image partakes of both, doing away with the art object and denying singularity at once, thus positioning it as a potentially trenchant critique of rarity and uniqueness. The entry of film into the art world occurred under the sign of democratization and a leveling of hierarchies and, as such, had much in common with the fledgling experimental cinema and its emphasis on access. Even Warhol's prolific film production remained outside of any real sales initiative. Despite the desire to undo uniqueness and rethink what counted as "art," however, the Fluxus artists and the filmmakers interested in issuing 8 mm reduction prints nevertheless prefigured later efforts to edition moving image art by conceiving of film as an object that could be sold and possessed rather than simply experienced. They suggested that film was something that could be owned.

Certified Art

Despite the fact that film and video are visual forms, on the art market they are wholly logocentric in that they depend absolutely on signatures and certificates to secure economic value. The 1960s marked the emergence not only of a more widespread presence of the moving image in art but also the appearance of a document that is integral to the way that it circulates on the market today: the certificate of authenticity. Though the use of agreements between artist and collector is centuries old, such documents traditionally guaranteed the work from conception to completion, specifying attributes such as subject matter, size, or materials and also fixing a date by which it might be delivered. The modern certificate of authenticity, by contrast, is largely concerned with what happens after the work's completion, with ensuring its enduring connection to the moment of fabrication and to the artist. By understanding the existence of the work of art to reside in the performative act of certification rather than in any of its inherent qualities, such certificates owe less to the old agreements between artist and patron than they do to Marcel Duchamp. In the words of Benjamin Buchloh, "Beginning with the readymade, the work of art had become the ultimate subject of a legal definition and the result of institutional validation. . . . The definition of the aesthetic becomes on the one hand a matter of linguistic convention and on the other the function of both a legal contract and an institutional discourse (a discourse of power rather than taste)."³² Perhaps surprisingly, Duchamp did not issue certificates authenticating his readymades or declaring them to be works of art. But after the move of the readymade had been made on the chessboard of artistic intervention, the path was open to designate anything as a work of art and secure its status as such through the act of notarization.

In the 1960s the legal contracts that would ensure the enforcement of the artificial rarity of the limited edition were developed and employed by artists who were engaged in challenging what might count as a work of art. Already in 1944 Duchamp had paid for a notary to certify that his *L.H.O.O.Q.* (1919) was authentic, and by 1959 Yves Klein was selling *Zones of Immaterial Pictorial Sensibility* (1959–62), in which the artist would sell empty space ("immaterial zones") for gold and issue the collector a receipt in return. The purchaser then had two options: to keep the receipt or to burn it, at which time Klein would throw half of the gold he had received for the work

in the Seine. In Piero Manzoni's *Declarations of Authenticity* (1961) the artist would sign another person and issue a certificate stating that the person is "therefore to be considered an authentic work of art for all intents and purposes." Robert Morris's *Untitled (Statement of Aesthetic Withdrawal)* (1963) reversed the usual function of certification by employing a notary to help execute a document in which he would withdraw "all aesthetic quality and content" from a work for which the collector, architect Philip Johnson, had not paid him. In the 1960s, then, the certificate is closely aligned with a sometimes humorous rethinking of artistic authorship and objecthood. In the case of artists such as Manzoni, Klein, and Morris the certificate was not simply an administrative and legal support to be hidden from public view but an integral part of the work—sometimes its only enduring trace.

The use of the certificate of authenticity in relation to the moving image is rather different in this regard, having much more in common with its employment in minimalism, which also dates to the 1960s. For minimalism the removal of the artist's signature from the artwork was part and parcel of the broader withdrawal of his or her hand in favor of the impersonality of industrial production. But rather than do away with the signature entirely, it was simply displaced onto an accompanying certificate. Here, such a document is a matter of authenticating the object, thereby facilitating market exchange and ensuring value. Such certificates are not understood to be artworks in themselves and would not tend to be displayed publicly. Dan Flavin's graph paper certificates, for example, include a drawing of the work in felt-tip marker but also the handwritten proviso "This is a certificate only. It is not a drawing of mine." But this certificate is not just any piece of paper. If it is lost or destroyed, the collector would be unable to resell the work since Flavin refused to issue replacements.³³ (Many artists will offer replacement certificates in the case of loss or theft.)

What had begun as a satirical play on the centrality of authenticity as a criterion for judging the work of art became, with minimalism, a nonsense market standard. The certificates of minimalism establish the contractual means that govern the sale of the moving image today. Artist David Claerbout has said that the certificate he provides in addition to the various technological components of his installations is "the most important thing of all. If the certificate is lost, the work itself is also lost. I therefore usually advise the buyer to above all store the certificate safely."³⁴

For both minimal art and the moving image the certificate of authenticity has the power to transform a mass-produced industrial commodity into a work of art through a legal contract. Moreover, in both cases such documents are frequently used to prescribe guidelines for the maintenance or manufacture of the work after purchase and can specify terms of exhibition, refabrication, and resale. The widespread acceptance of the certificate as a way to reintroduce notions of authenticity and authorship when dealing with works of art made in reproducible media was a key touchstone in smoothing the way toward the valorization of the moving image on the art market.

Thwarted Pioneers

Despite the general alignment of the moving image with reproducibility and circulation, in the late 1960s several galleries across Europe began to explore the possibility of issuing limited editions of artists' films. In 1966 Claude Givaudan opened a gallery on the Boulevard St-Germain in Paris that specialized in the sale of artists' multiples; by 1968 he began to include film in his offerings. News of this initiative spread from Paris to London, where Gregory Markopoulos and Robert Beavers entered into a partnership with René Gimpel of Gimpel Fils Gallery to do the same. In a letter to his friend Alice Burkhardt written in late August 1968, Markopoulos expressed interest about the plan, writing that it was "the only way to survive with filmmaking" since "distribution was for the birds."³⁵ As will be explored at length in chapter 7, Markopoulos withdrew his work from rental-based distribution that year out of a conviction that this model was inhospitable to the filmmaker and did not permit the level of control he desired to have over his work. In correspondence with Gimpel, Markopoulos established guidelines for the sale of prints, producing documents such as "Proposals Towards a Mutual Agreement of Sale" and "Proposals Towards a Preservation System of Collector's Prints." He tried to get other filmmakers, such as Stan Brakhage and Peter Kubelka, interested in the project.³⁶ Birgit and Wilhelm Hein, who also became involved, were keen for the initiative to work, citing the hope that it would be more lucrative than their previous experiences with distribution.³⁷ On September 20, 1969, Gimpel held a screening at the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London in an

attempt to promote the venture and stimulate interest among collectors. An anonymously penned column entitled “Films for Sale” appeared in the ICA’s publication *Eventsheet* to advertise the evening. It justified the sale of editions by emphasizing that fine art and experimental film shared a mode of production: the maker works alone, with “total, individual control.”³⁸ In addition to works by Markopoulos the evening included films by Robert Beavers, Stan Brakhage, Kurt Kren, the Heins, and Dieter Meier. In a letter to Peter Weibel and Valie Export the Heins described the audience as composed of “very successful [*arrivierten*]” individuals, while to Kren they wrote, “All the important people were there.”³⁹

Although the author of “Films for Sale” was in large part correct in comparing the modes of production employed in fine art and in experimental film, it is worth emphasizing the extent to which artistic production—and particularly sculpture, the medium mentioned in the column—was undergoing increased technologization at this time. Writing in the *Observer* in February 1969, critic Nigel Gosling noted that Gimpel’s initiative was “an intriguing example of a current fashion in reverse”: instead of art objects being transformed into multiples through the embrace of industrial fabrication, here multiples were being transformed into art objects.⁴⁰ Though the editions were expensively priced, between £600 and £5,000 (a purchasing power of between £8,820.96 and £73,508.00 in 2014),⁴¹ Gosling specifies that the filmmakers would retain both the original negative and normal distribution rights, meaning that the collector would have to negotiate issues of wear-and-tear and be open to the possibility that copies of the film might circulate beyond the numbered edition. Indeed, in his “Proposals Towards a Mutual Agreement of Sale” Markopoulos suggests that the gallery should take on the task of promoting “projection copies” that would circulate outside the edition to galleries and museums across Europe and North America, meaning that the limited nature of these editions was far from guaranteed.⁴²

When Gimpel and his family expanded to New York City in March 1969 with the opening of the Gimpel Weitzenhoffer Gallery at 1040 Madison Avenue, the *New York Times* carried an announcement of the initiative, noting that Gimpel Weitzenhoffer was the first major American gallery to engage in the sale of film as art objects.⁴³ Despite this enthusiasm and promotion, the initiative was stillborn. Birgit Hein recalls being very disappointed at how quickly the venture fizzled.⁴⁴ Correspondence between

Gimpel and Markopoulos continued through the close of 1971, as both parties attempted to move forward with their plan and smooth out wrinkles, but there were no willing collectors, and Gimpel does not recall selling any prints by Markopoulos or Beavers. He attributes this failure to 16 mm technology being “too impractical” for collectors to operate at home and also to unresolved legal questions concerning copyright and exhibition rights.⁴⁵ Markopoulos and Beavers ended their involvement with Gimpel after the gallery proposed to abandon the limited-edition model and sell the films at a lower price in unlimited editions.

Markopoulos did not, however, immediately give up on the sale of film prints as art objects. Throughout 1971 he continued to discuss the possibility of editioning film with galleries in Switzerland, the Netherlands, and Italy but had no success. Paolo Cardazzo of the Galleria D’Arte Del Cavallino in Venice wrote to say that Markopoulos’s prices were too high and that “it [was] unusual for a customer to spend so much money for a movie that lasts so little time.”⁴⁶ Before finally abandoning the editioning model, Markopoulos’s last idea was to sell the editions himself through advertisements in arts publications. Inspired by an advertisement in the *International Herald Tribune* for a limited-edition book by Muriel Sparks, he proposed the plan to Beavers, but it does not appear that he went further with the idea than writing to the Baden Baden-based magazine *Das Kunstwerk* to inquire about its advertising rates.⁴⁷

The close connection between the vogue for sculptural multiples and the fledgling market for film and video is also visible in Gerry Schum’s twin projects in Düsseldorf, the Fernsehgalerie (1968–70) and the videogalerie schum (1971–73). In 1968 Schum made a film about multiples entitled *Konsumkunst—Kunstkonsum* (1968), or “Consumer Art—Art Consumption,” for the West German television station Westdeutscher Rundfunk. Produced in collaboration with Hannah Weitemeier and Bernard Höke, it was broadcast only once, on October 17, 1968. The thirty-minute film begins with a series of pans over brochures and price lists advertising multiples for sale, while a voice-over lists them by artist, issuing agency, edition size, and price. *Konsumkunst—Kunstkonsum* introduces the viewer to a number of gallerists dealing in multiples and adopts a somewhat pedagogical tone. It aims to help a broad public understand the benefits of what is presented as a democratization of art occurring as a by-product of contemporary artists’ interest in seriality and industrially produced materials.

The Swiss graphic designer Karl Gerstner calls for the necessity of creating an art market that would be “different from today’s market” and would include a broad public, those who don’t yet “visit galleries, just as in the past people were timid about visiting banks.” Schum interviews Heinz Mack, an artist who plans to engage, as the voice-over puts it, in a “special form of multiplication: reproduction through the mass medium of television.” Mack describes a plan for an exhibition that would take place solely through broadcasting, with all the objects displayed therein to be destroyed after the program ended. The artist fulfilled this desire with the *Tele Mack*, *Tele-Mack*, *Telemack* project (1968–69); Schum would take up a similar idea for his Fernsehgalerie.

With the Fernsehgalerie Schum escaped the objecthood of the work of art and the elitism of the gallery. His first commission, *Land Art*, was broadcast on the West Berlin television station Sender Freies Berlin on April 15, 1969, and included artists such as Walter De Maria, Michael Heizer, and Robert Smithson. To introduce the program, Schum expressed that “the Fernsehgalerie was borne [sic] of a wish to directly confront the broadest possible audience with the current trends of international art production.”⁴⁸ It is worth noting that the particular trend of international art production Schum chose to showcase was one with the relationship between rarity and reproducibility at its core: much land art was concerned with, among other things, interrogating the dialectical tension between the singular, auratic work inseparable from its geographic emplacement and the ways in which it would circulate via its reproduction. Perhaps best encapsulated in Smithson’s notion of the site/nonsite, much land art was not about resurrecting auratic purity but about understanding rarity and reproducibility as at once propelling and cancelling one another. Smithson, for example, intended that his *Spiral Jetty* (1970) would circulate through documentation, particularly through his film of the same name, which includes numerous references to the ways by which natural landscapes enter cultural representation (be it in surveyors’ maps or in Hitchcock’s *North by Northwest* [1959]). Schum’s Fernsehgalerie took up a similar wager, using the dematerialized medium of television to bring works of obstinate materiality and singularity to a vast audience. Some one hundred thousand viewers watched the broadcast.⁴⁹

After a second commission, *Identifications* (1970), Schum had great difficulty securing the continued support of broadcasters, leading him, in

something of an about-face, to the idea of the videogalerie. The advent of video had drawn an increasing number of artists to the moving image. Although the new medium was by no means wholly accepted by the artistic establishment at the time, it did enjoy a closer relationship to the gallery world than did experimental film, largely because many of its practitioners simultaneously produced work in other, more salable media. Like experimental film, early video did not derive the bulk of its funding from the sale of individual works. But whereas experimental filmmakers often held teaching positions to secure an income and had little involvement with the art world, video art was largely funded by grants, residencies, and the sale of the artist's nonvideo works. Despite these differences, video shared with experimental film the sense that it was a noncommodifiable, reproducible medium invested with a democratizing potential that would revolutionize artistic production.

Schum's videogalerie, located at Ratzingerstrasse 37 in Düsseldorf, turned away from this paradigm and away from the dematerialized mass dissemination of the Fernsehgalerie. The videogalerie issued videotapes in both limited and unlimited editions according to a precisely formulated pricing model, complete with signed and numbered certificates of authenticity. Editions were made available as early as the October 1970 Cologne Kunstmarkt art fair, even before the November 30, 1970, broadcast of *Identifications*. Schum believed that the relative simplicity of the technology involved made video into a salable object in a manner that was impossible with film: "The key point about videos is that they do not have the problems 16mm films do. . . . The problem with films is that you need a darkened room and someone who knows how to project the film, while television is a part of our daily environment, it has none of the difficulties of projection as people are familiar with the medium."⁵⁰ A 1971 price list for the videogalerie shows unlimited editions priced between five hundred and eight hundred Deutschmarks, thus beginning slightly above the four hundred Deutschmarks Schum had designated as the average price for multiples in *Konsumkunst—Kunstkonsum*. An edition of six of Joseph Beuys's *Filz-TV* (*Felt TV*, 1970, shown in *Identifications*) is listed at DM9,800 and an edition of four of Gilbert and George's *The Nature of Our Looking* (1970, also in *Identifications*) is priced at DM4,800 and declared sold out.⁵¹

Ian White has written that Schum's videogalerie embraced "an effectively untested financial model" in its embrace of the video limited edition.⁵²

It is a model that would have to undergo its true test not in Düsseldorf with Schum but in New York with Leo Castelli: in late 1972, after eighteen months in operation, Schum decided to close his gallery because of financial difficulties. A low demand from institutions and private collectors, coupled with problems of video format compatibility and high overheads, pushed the gallery into an untenable financial situation. Schum committed suicide in March 1973. While it would be easy to see Schum as a sell-out, trying and failing to commodify film and video, based on the understanding of multiples advanced in *Konsumkunst—Kunstkonsum*, a rather different view comes into focus. Commodification might have been a necessary side effect, but it was more likely that Schum's primary aim in editioning film and video was to open contemporary art to new audiences who would have been priced out of the luxury market of unique objects. Understanding Schum's activities in this way makes the switch from the Fernsehgalerie to the videogalerie appear not as a betrayal of principles but as an effort to carry on the same project by other means: to open new pathways of circulation for artistic production.

Unlike Schum, Castelli had no particular commitment to the advancement of the multiple as an art form or to the expansion of contemporary art's collector base. Castelli had begun to deal in film and video in 1968 for the simple reason that several of the most prominent artists he represented—such as Bruce Nauman and Robert Morris—had begun to produce work in those media. In 1974 Castelli undertook a joint venture with Ileana Sonnabend that would legitimate the sale of videotapes as art objects, while simultaneously offering a rental-based model of distribution. Run by Nina Sundell and Joyce Nereaux and initially based in a loft on Greene Street in New York, Castelli-Sonnabend Tapes and Films Inc. became the first organization devoted to selling moving image art in the United States, offering both film and video for sale to private collectors and institutions. *Art Rite* magazine publicized its inauguration this way: "Most of their tapes sell according to length and whether they are b & w or color (rather than by the status of the artist). Prices tend to be under \$250. A distribution system is just beginning to be set up. Castelli-Sonnabend will control the showing and rental of the tapes (and film) while other galleries will be able to buy for resale at a gallery discount. The market at this time is almost exclusively universities and museums, but the number of collectors who are interested is slowly growing."⁵³

Like many bronze editions in the late nineteenth century, these prints and tapes were numbered solely for administrative purposes and produced as demand presented itself. If a purchase became damaged or worn, the collecting institution could have it replaced for the cost of copying and shipping. In most cases only a handful of copies were produced and even the most popular offerings—such as Joan Jonas's *Vertical Roll* (1972) and Richard Serra's *Television Delivers People* (1973)—made it to just over fifty copies.⁵⁴ The organization also issued a very small number of videotapes (but no films) as limited editions of twenty, priced at \$1,000, all of which had been made at Art/Tapes/22, a production center in Florence run by Giancarlo and Maria Gloria Bicocchi.⁵⁵ Though these are marked as such in volume 1, number 1 of the Castelli-Sonnabend catalogue, by 1982 none of the works marked as editions of twenty retain that designation—though they do retain their elevated price.

At Castelli-Sonnabend rentals far outweighed sales, and the artificial scarcity imposed by limiting the number of tapes available did not incite increased demand; on the contrary, the editioned tapes did not sell as well as many of the uneditioned tapes, presumably because of their inflated prices. As early as 1977 the venture was experiencing serious financial difficulty. A memo dated September 30, 1977, states that the organization had \$14,415.23 in outstanding bills and owed \$29,539.33 to artists.⁵⁶ By February 1979 there was serious discussion about alternative ways of running Castelli-Sonnabend, which consistently posted an annual deficit of some \$10,000, a buying power of \$32,870.24 in 2015 dollars. The ideas floated included obtaining not-for-profit status or reabsorbing the organization back into the Leo Castelli Gallery. Despite these ongoing difficulties, Castelli-Sonnabend continued its activities until ceasing operation on July 1, 1985, in part because it could not keep pace with shifting video formats.

After the shuttering of Castelli-Sonnabend, video found continued support in public and private granting agencies and not-for-profit distributors. Uneditioned works could be rented through organizations such as Electronic Arts Intermix (EAI), founded in 1971 by Howard Wise after the closure of his eponymous gallery, and Video Data Bank (VDB), founded in 1976. In fact, after the dissolution of Castelli-Sonnabend many of the tapes distributed by that organization found their way to EAI and VDB, where they were made available for rent.⁵⁷ In the British context video also stayed outside the commercial gallery circuit. David Curtis notes that though

galleries such as Lisson Gallery, Nigel Greenwood, Jack Wendler, Robert Self, Angela Flowers, and others began to dabble in video in the early 1970s, they soon became aware that no market for it existed. Furthermore, Curtis writes that the arrival of selections from Castelli-Sonnabend at “The Video Show: First Festival of Independent Video” in 1975—evidence that a commercial gallery might stand behind video—was at odds with the British experience: “Interest by British galleries had been limited; many British artists disapproved of limited-edition works in principle; certainly any hope that a market might develop in Britain proved premature.”⁵⁸

In experimental film, although the rental model stayed strong, some individuals began to display frustration about the limited possibilities for remuneration stemming from that form of distribution. Seeing the increased acceptance of the moving image in the art world, certain experimental filmmakers followed Markopoulos in looking to that realm for financial support. Kenneth Anger claims to have made a series of limited-edition films in the late 1970s for private collectors that were never publically exhibited.⁵⁹ After a visit to Amsterdam, where he had come into contact with successful efforts to sell film prints, Larry Jordan published a polemic entitled “Survival in the Independent-Non-Commercial-Avant-Garde-Experimental-Personal-Expressionistic Film Market of 1979.” Jordan advocated not joining the art world *per se* but adopting some of its practices, such as the sale of films to private collectors. “Film artists,” he wrote, “have been too long intimidated by their own counter-cultural identifications on the one hand and fear of the art ‘establishment’ on the other.”⁶⁰ Jordan ruefully acknowledged that the elevation of a work’s monetary value can lead to an augmented respect and to increased possibilities of archival preservation, as well as the fact that the sale of films as art objects was perhaps the only way filmmakers would be able to secure a livelihood from their practice without resorting to other forms of employment, such as teaching. Unlike Conner before him, Jordan recognized that the sale of a film for the life of that print only would not succeed: “Purchase of film *prints* has never greatly interested art collectors for the very reason that a *print* is of no real value as an investment. Only one-of-a-kind originals (from which the collector can make prints or not) have saleable value—saleable, that is, at prices which will be of any sort of real help to the film artist. Progressive collectors *will* collect films (as they do Video) under the right conditions.”⁶¹

Jordan recognized that collectors wanted to be able to display their acquisitions while also maintaining the work in pristine condition—something that would be impossible through the sale of prints alone. He also acknowledged the pull of the unique object. Though Jordan does not elaborate on what would count as a “one-of-a-kind original”—the negative, perhaps—he identifies solutions to two key problems that had obstructed the sale of films as art objects in the past. If film were to become collectible, it would have to bend to the demand for scarcity proper to the collector’s market, much as video had done before it. Jordan’s proposal received no substantial attention within the experimental film community. Yet he looked forward to the day when the “first sale of a five minute film original for \$10,000 or more” would change “the face of the art world. . . . Film would be a valuable commodity, which at present it is not. And no one could ever shrug it off again.”⁶²

Toward Market Viability

This is precisely what took place in the 1990s. The decade witnessed a tremendous explosion of moving image art. With improvements in projection technology video was no longer restricted to the small image of the television monitor. The digitization of media spurred a new mobility of images and offered artists a new ease with production and postproduction techniques. Analog film found itself under threat of obsolescence and reappeared as a major component of gallery-based practice for the first time since its displacement by video. Moving image art had finally accumulated an aesthetic history, with pioneers such as Bruce Nauman, Richard Serra, and Andy Warhol now firmly canonized. Many of the decade’s most prominent emerging artists, such as Matthew Barney, Stan Douglas, and Douglas Gordon, worked extensively in video, and major museums endorsed the moving image as never before.

Amid this flurry of activity, the old idea of the limited edition, which had never entirely disappeared, gained new life—and this time both private and institutional collectors were ready to invest. The 1980s had solidified the position of editioned photography on the art market; the 1990s would do the same for film and video. Major New York gallerists such as Barbara Gladstone, Marian Goodman, and David Zwirner began

to represent an increasing number of moving image artists and to edition their work. Though active throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Bill Viola began to produce small editions of his work with his first private gallery show at Donald Young Gallery, Seattle, in May 1992, offering three works in an edition of two plus one artist's proof.⁶³ David Zwirner Gallery opened in 1993 and immediately began to offer editioned video by artists such as Stan Douglas (*Hors champ*, 1992) and Diana Thater (*Late and Soon: Occident Trotting*, 1993). In 1994 Matthew Barney's *Cremaster 4* (1994), the first of the series to be produced, was issued by Barbara Gladstone Gallery in an edition of ten on 35 mm in deluxe sculptural packaging. Lucy Gunning, Ann Hamilton, William Kentridge, and other prominent artists all began to edition work in the first half of the decade. As moving image art began to increasingly mimic the structures of independent film and production costs soared, the high revenues secured by the editioning model were more necessary than ever.

Multiple cooperating factors worked to create increased market viability for film and video in the 1990s, the first of which was economic. Art Basel's Noah Horowitz emphasizes the crash of 1990 as instrumental in the creation of a new market for video: "Galleries increasingly began exhibiting video largely because, according to Barbara London, associate director in MoMA's Department of Film and Video, 'they had nothing to lose'; sales had dried up and the opportunity cost of showing video and other alternative practices diminished."⁶⁴ After the market for large-scale color photography—also a medium of the multiple—began to boom in the 1980s, the moving image could appear as a worthy risk with a low opportunity cost. While the new viability of cheaper, less-object-oriented work may be ascribed in part to the severe price deflation at that time, other key factors were at play, factors that demonstrate the extent to which market valorization is never a matter of economics alone but rather is deeply shaped by elements of the art world that at first glance operate far from the transactions taking place at auction houses and commercial galleries.

The second factor is linked to technological innovation and changes in the speed and facility of image reproduction and circulation. While the mainstream adoption of the Internet in the mid-1990s spurred a significant artistic trend of remaking and recycling existing cultural forms, it also resulted in a qualitative leap in the transportability of images and sounds that induced a crisis of authenticity comparable to that of

the late nineteenth century. Just as was the case for printmaking and bronze sculpture in the late nineteenth century, the moving image editions that emerged in the late twentieth century were attempts to reconstruct authenticity and (near) uniqueness amid a new proliferation of copies. During this period edition sizes shrank dramatically: while Castelli-Sonnabend Tapes and Films offered editions of twenty, by the 1990s this number had dropped to fewer than ten and often as few as three. At a time when images were more mobile than ever before, the limited edition provided a way of guaranteeing that the work would circulate only within authorized channels and would be seen only in the proper setting. While it was always possible to duplicate videocassettes, the 1990s and 2000s heralded a qualitative shift in the ease of image reproduction. Jack Valenti of the Motion Picture Association of America had cause to assert that his organization was fighting its “own terrorist war” against copyright infringement—a war it continues to lose.⁶⁵ Unlike the film industry, the art world had access to radical measures that would successfully ensure the integrity of its product. Rose Lord, director of Marian Goodman Gallery, has stated that “all our artists want their works to be shown under very specific circumstances, where every aspect is carefully calibrated. That’s why we have collectors sign purchase agreements that insure that the works will be shown as per the artist’s wishes.”⁶⁶ The open circulation of artists’ work on DVD would result in a flood of copies of varying quality that could be consumed on laptops or as ambient background at a party. Quality control is thus asserted as a motivating factor behind the limited edition: the rarity of the work is constructed not simply to entice collectors but also to guard against the possibility of a degraded image.

The third and perhaps most important factor in the rise of the limited edition is again a matter of technological change but also of institutional politics: it concerns the advent of high-quality, low-cost video projection and its tremendous institutional endorsement from the early 1990s onward. The moving image might have once challenged the traditional museum, but in the 1990s, endowed with a new, large-scale mode of display, it was recruited to help institutions secure relevance in an increasingly competitive marketplace demanding breathtaking, immersive experiences. Where institutions go, the market follows. Institutional endorsement can have a profound effect on the price of an art object, a fact clearly demonstrated by the controversy surrounding the

New Museum for Contemporary Art's *Skin Fruit* exhibition of trustee Dakis Joannou's private collection in 2009.⁶⁷ In the case of photography the J. Paul Getty Museum's June 8, 1984, purchase of five major private collections of vintage prints for a reported \$20 million forever changed the market possibilities of the medium.⁶⁸ While no single event comparable to the Getty purchase may be cited in the case of the moving image, the 1990s and 2000s saw an institutional investment without parallel in the history of art. The cavernous spaces of newly opened or newly renovated museums, many of which are devoted exclusively to contemporary art, called for colossal installations and big box office receipts.⁶⁹ The turn away from monitor-based presentation and toward projection resulted in a greater sense of monumentality and an increased assertion of presence in the space of the gallery. It pulled video away from its associations with television and its domestic banality and aligned it with a medium by then possessing increasing cultural cachet—the cinema.⁷⁰

While projection had been possible since even before the invention of video recording technology, it was seldom used in art practice until cheap, bright, crisp projectors came to market in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In 1992 video installation featured heavily at Documenta IX, the biggest, costliest, and best-attended Documenta since 1959.⁷¹ As one critic put it, the curator, Jan de Hoet, “knows that there is an almost desperate need now to bridge the worlds of high art and popular culture in a new way, and that using massive exhibitions like this one to attract hundreds of thousands of people is certainly a part of that process.”⁷² In 1996 both *Hall of Mirrors: Art and Film Since 1945* (Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles) and *Spellbound: Art and Film* (Hayward Gallery, London) were huge shows, bringing together contemporary artists with Hollywood directors in a drive for accessibility. Museums such as the Museum of Modern Art, Tate Modern, and the Whitney Museum of American Art greatly expanded their moving image holdings during this time, purchasing historical and contemporary work and also commissioning temporary projects.⁷³ Christopher Eamon, former curator of the Kramlich collection, has stressed the extent to which the institutional endorsement of the installation format—rather than the 1990 market crash—is key in understanding the ascendance of video art on the 1990s and 2000s art market.⁷⁴ An installation, after all, cannot be easily rented and more clearly asserts its difference from mass circulating films and tapes through its claiming of gallery space. It was a reciprocally

beneficial situation: major museums looked to the moving image for scalar intensity and relevance, making commissions and purchases at prices high for the moving image yet a pittance compared to painting; in turn, this institutional legitimation accorded the moving image a new status on the primary market.

Opposition and Advocacy

The increased visibility of the limited-edition model has brought increased criticism. For some artists, such as Martha Rosler, the solution is to opt out, to continue to issue unlimited editions that will be distributed through organizations such as EAI and VDB.⁷⁵ For others the popularity of the limited edition is something to be attacked outright. Produced anonymously and distributed online by the activist/artist collective [®]ark (pronounced “art mark”), *Untitled #29.95: A Video About Video* (1999) is a fifteen-minute work that constructs a schematic history of video art based on the changing relationship between the medium and the market. It embraces a low-tech collage aesthetic that appropriates various clips of video art from the last forty-five years and rephotographs them off of television monitors. On the soundtrack a computerized female voice-over offers a narrative of the medium as subject to a tragic fall into market exploitation. As *Untitled #29.95* would have it, at the time of its introduction to artistic production, video was used to “challenge the authority of the mass medium and the materialism of the art world.” The narrator continues: “Video was born under radicalism, and from the beginning it was used as an instrument of resistance.” A brief interval of black gives way to Rosler stabbing a fork into the air, her *Semiotics of the Kitchen* (1975) playing on a television screen. Castelli is singled out as the villain who tried to commodify video by making it into a limited edition, but, the narrator tells us, “It didn’t work. Thank God. Perhaps they thought video was too much like TV, the ultimate in lowbrow culture.”

Untitled #29.95 follows the development of video through the late 1970s and 1980s, asserting it to be a rich field of practice closely linked to activism—not just uncommercial but decidedly anticommercial. The video posits the decimation of National Endowment for the Arts funding for media art as the event that put an end to politicized video practices

circulating outside of the institutional art world. In its place a gallery-bankrolled video art emerged that eschewed political commitment in favor of productions *Untitled #29.95* deems decadent (Matthew Barney) or trivial (Lucy Gunning).⁷⁶ The video cites a 1998 *New York Times* article by Roberta Smith, “Art of the Moment, Here to Stay,” as signaling the new acceptance of this brand of video in the gallery establishment. Smith proclaims the importance of 1990s practices by comparing them to pioneers like William Wegman and Bruce Nauman. The narrator intones, “She does not even mention the eighties, as if an entire decade of incredible video production around race, class, gender, sexuality, media, politics and power relations never even existed. Now videos are being sold in limited editions in New York galleries and not for \$29.95.” White text scrolls on black screens, listing works that have been editioned and their prices: “Stan Douglas, *Overture*, \$150,000, limited edition of 2. Diana Thater’s *China* \$60,000. *Cremaster* by Matthew Barney, limited edition of 2, \$25,000. Gillian Wearing’s *10-16 I heard* went for \$60,000. It’s just a videotape, for God’s sake.”

Untitled #29.95 is not alone in arguing that the existence of the limited edition fundamentally contradicts the medium-specific qualities of video. Pierre Huyghe has said, “For videos, editions are fake. . . . When Rodin could only cast three sculptures of a nude before the mold lost its sharpness, it made sense. But all my works are on my hard drive, in ones and zeros.”⁷⁷ Yet Huyghe issues his films and videos in limited editions through Marian Goodman Gallery, suggesting that despite being “fake,” editioning remains worthwhile for him. In a similar vein Dieter Daniels has remarked that “the principle of the signed, limited-edition video cassette or DVD is absurd. A signature does not impart an image carrier with the character of an original, but only stands for a commercial agreement to limit the edition to a certain number of copies, whose extent depends not on the reproducibility of the medium as for woodcuts or etchings, but merely on market-strategy factors.”⁷⁸ Certainly, the aura of rarity that surrounds the limited edition is an artificial construction, but it is one with real effects—both positive and negative. Editioning is no more “fake” than the convention of delaying the DVD release of a film until after its theatrical run has been completed; it is, like the delayed DVD release, a mechanism to generate value. These are conventions that are agreed upon by market actors, conventions that possess a certain truth despite their status as historical constructs.

The critique of editioning advanced in *Untitled #29.95* greatly oversimplifies the relationship between moving image and the art market today. Nowhere does the video confront the difficult question of how artists might make a living from their art if not by editioning. The recent movement of many individuals associated with the experimental film tradition into the gallery context testifies to the possibility of the kind of financial support private and institutional collectors can provide. Kenneth Anger, Harun Farocki, Isaac Julien, Jonas Mekas, and Leslie Thornton are but a few examples of those who have decided to edition their work after long careers outside the art system. Matthias Müller, another such filmmaker, has stated that, owing to financial realities, “there is no alternative *but* a gallery, which demands that works be sold as limited editions.”⁷⁹ Similarly, though Anthony McCall has expressed “some problems with the idea of editioning: The scarcity value is created quite artificially since there is no technical limit to the number of copies that could be made,” he simultaneously recognizes it as a sustainable model that allows the sale of one work to finance the next.⁸⁰ For those who are successful in selling work to collectors—a fate certainly not met by all—editioning can help to resolve the problem that had perennially faced experimental film: the lack of a viable economic framework.

At stake in the sale of the moving image as limited edition is not only the artist’s present but also the artwork’s future. When a collector buys an edition—sold not as film print or as DVD but as a set of archival materials and rights governing the usage of those materials—he or she also takes on responsibility for the care and preservation of that work. Many museums, such as Tate Modern, will only accession editioned artworks—which means that the limited edition is not simply a way of cashing in but is also a way of ensuring that the artwork will be amenable to institutional structures that participate in history-writing and that enable the preservation and exhibition of the work for posterity. It is without question that much work remains to be done to grapple with the particular challenges that the moving image poses to the practices of acquisition, collection, and exhibition at major institutions, and there may be cases in which such institutions will have to adjust their policies to cater to its needs. But the limited edition constitutes a site at which the moving image and the museum are meeting each other halfway. While certainly some rental-based distribution organizations, such as Electronic Arts Intermix, are engaged in serious

preservation activities, the involvement of collecting institutions is necessary to ensure the stewardship of vulnerable media artifacts. Freely circulating VHS tapes, DVDs, or compressed computer files are unable, for reasons of quality and longevity, to function as archival masters. It is expensive and time-consuming to engage in processes of digital migration from format to format. Preservation is a costly business, and an institution is more likely to invest in a given work if it has secure knowledge that it is one of a limited number of stakeholders in it. For many moving image artworks, editioning is perhaps the best way to ensure long-term safekeeping.

Ex Post Facto

These financial and archival benefits have together motivated the increasingly common practice of retroactive editioning, whereby historical works uneditioned at the time of production—sometimes circulating through the rental model—are later offered for sale in limited editions. Like editioning more generally, this practice has precedents in the photography market, where editioned prints are sometimes made long after the photograph was taken, even after the photographer's death. In 2012 the Center for Visual Music issued a three-screen "reconstruction" of Oskar Fischinger's multimedia event *Raumlichtkunst* (1926/2012) in an edition of five.⁸¹ The Paul Sharits estate has offered the multiscreen installations *Shutter Interface* (1975) in an edition of five and *Dream Displacement* (1976) in an edition of three. In 2008 the Jack Smith estate was sold to Barbara Gladstone Gallery, which financed the restoration of eleven films made between 1950 and 1980, offering them together as an edition of ten to institutional collectors only.⁸² (Restricting sales to institutions asserts increased control over the circulation of the editions, as they will not risk being flipped as they might be by private collectors.) Especially given the extent to which Smith resisted any form of commodification during his lifetime—consistently turning to the unfinished film as a means of evading a commercial logic and decrying the "landlordism" of the "rented world"—this gesture signaled a significant recuperation of the history of experimental cinema by the art market, even though Gladstone also deposited new prints with rental-based organizations, intelligently allowing this form of distribution to coexist with the edition. Institutions acquiring the edition received a set of prints

and an exhibition copy on DVD but no master materials, meaning that they must go back to Gladstone to replace prints or update formats when necessary. Although this solution is viable in the short term, while Gladstone Gallery remains in operation and is able to supply replacements, the future of these editions after such a time remains uncertain.

More forward thinking is the model adopted by the Conner Family Trust. Under the direction of Michelle Silva, the Trust issues historical works by Bruce Conner in editions of six plus two artist's proofs through the Michael Kohn Gallery in Los Angeles, providing acquiring institutions with a package of master materials that enable long-term preservation. The first three of these editions were issued during Conner's lifetime and are not fully retroactive in the sense that they involve not only the digital restoration of film elements but also the artist's reimagining of his own historical material to create new works. *EVE-RAY-FOREVER* (1965/2006) is a new edit based on a silent three-channel 8 mm installation exhibited in 1965 at the Rose Art Museum at Brandeis University, using footage from *COSMIC RAY* (1961); *THREE SCREEN RAY* (1961/2006) is a three-channel installation with sound, also originating in *COSMIC RAY*; and *EASTER MORNING* (1966/2008), the last work Conner completed before his death, returns to the 8 mm Kodachrome of *EASTER MORNING RAGA* (1966). Acquiring institutions for these works include the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Walker Art Center. This strategy of revisiting past work to edition a new version has also been pursued by Kenneth Anger, who exhibited a three-screen edition of *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome* (1958/2014) through Sprüth Magers in the Unlimited section of Art Basel in 2015, based on a rarely screened 1958 version.⁸³ Neither Conner nor Anger used triple projection for the first time with these editions; both had employed it in historical iterations of the works in question. Yet the resurrection of the three-screen format in the new century is notable for transforming canonical films known almost exclusively as single projections seen in the cinema—namely, *COSMIC RAY* and *Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome*—into multichannel installations befitting the gallery setting in which editioned artworks are most often encountered. Greg Zinman's astute assessment of the editioning of *Raumlichtkunst* might apply here, too: these are "timely instantiation[s] of the burgeoning art world interest in cinema's expanded field."⁸⁴ Film history is reconfigured to meet the demands of contemporary exhibition practice.

Approaching Conner's death in 2008, the estate initiated the process of meticulously restoring and editioning selected films. The estate withdrew from circulation the uneditioned DVDs issued in 2002 and 2003 by the Kohn Gallery and in 2006 pulled all prints in distribution with cooperative organizations such as Canyon Cinema.⁸⁵ (Prints and digital copies remain available for rent through the estate on a discretionary basis.) The first film selected for editioning was *CROSSROADS* (1976), which had received substantial attention in the art world after its inclusion as a digital installation (Conner's first) in *Unknown Quantity*, an exhibition conceived by theorist Paul Virilio for the Fondation Cartier in Paris in 2002–3. Its reputation in the art context grew when it was included in the 2006 Berlin Biennale, *Of Mice and Men*, curated by Maurizio Cattelan, Massimiliano Gioni, and Ali Subotnik. *CROSSROADS* was editioned in 2013 following an extensive restoration and digitization.⁸⁶ Offered to institutional collectors only, it was acquired by institutions including the Israel Museum, the Pinault Foundation, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art/Museum of Modern Art (a coacquisition), and the Hammer Museum. Editions of *A MOVIE*, *BREAKAWAY* (1966), *REPORT* (1963–67), and *LOOKING FOR MUSHROOMS* (both the Beatles and Terry Riley versions, 1959–67/1996) are currently in progress. Silva describes the motivations behind the decision to edition selected historical works as multiple: it allows the works to reach new and larger audiences, it provides a way to finance costly restoration work, and, above all, it is a means of ensuring quality control for the work of an artist who never wanted his films to be shown online because of the presence of advertisements and what he believed to be poor viewing conditions.⁸⁷

A comprehensive edition package enables the estate to guarantee the long-term integrity of the work and endow institutions with the materials and information necessary to preserve the artist's intentions. Institutions purchasing *CROSSROADS*, for instance, receive a 35 mm release print; a DCP; 4K DPX restored files and audio on an LTO-6 cartridge; 4K DPX restored files, audio, and exhibition formats on RAID; and a certificate of authenticity signed by Jean Conner, the artist's widow. From the 4K scans collectors can produce further film prints if required. Accompanying these materials are extensive installation guidelines that establish acceptable dimensions, lighting conditions, projection standards, painting specifications, and seating provision. Editioning has also made it feasible—though it remains costly—to clear copyright for music that appears in the

films, something Conner never did during his lifetime despite his use of songs from high-profile musicians such as Ray Charles and the Beatles, leaving his work open to charges of infringement. Editioning has in two ways enabled the estate to bring Conner's work, in Silva's words, "above ground": the restricted circulation of the editions allows the estate to safely clear rights to only cinema and museum exhibition, forgoing unrestricted rights that would allow online broadcast (which would be much more expensive but is prohibited in the edition contracts), and it provides the funds to do so.

If Huyghe deemed editions "fake," the practice of retroactive editioning adds an additional twinge of phoniness by occurring *ex post facto*, often transforming works that had inhabited an economy of the multiple into quasi originals and betraying the ideology of access that has historically characterized experimental cinema. The rise of this practice poses serious questions about historicity and authenticity.⁸⁸ For instance, to what extent are the original distribution choices of a particular work to be considered as an integral part of its constitution as an artifact? Does the retroactivity of later editioning compromise the work's authenticity by imposing a condition not present at the time of production? Current institutional practice suggests that the answers to these questions are "not very" and "no." On the photography market later editions are not valued as highly as vintage prints, which are presumed to be more authentic owing to their having been printed close to the time the photograph was taken, either by the photographer or under their supervision.⁸⁹ This hierarchy does not appear to resonate in the market for moving image works, where the uneditioned prints of many museums' film and education departments are more akin to vintage prints (that is, they tend to have been made closer to the film's creation) but are nowhere near as valuable as an edition. This difference between the film and photography markets possibly stems from their very different material constraints: photography does not degrade with each showing as film does, and there need be no debate about whether an institution possesses the rights to transfer a photograph to a digital format for exhibition, as there is with film. The edition's more expansive set of rights (which can ensure image quality and format flexibility), newly restored materials, and greater archival stability accord it more value than would be generated by whatever augmented, "vintage" authenticity one might attach to an older print.

If an institution owned an old, uneditioned print of *CROSSROADS*, its curators might wonder why they should now invest in the high-priced edition, when they could instead continue to rely on their print. Showing prints on loop in a gallery setting results in their ruin within days, so inevitably copies must be made. Given the high cost of photochemical film, most institutions turn to the production of digital exhibition copies when they wish to display an uneditioned film from their collection in the gallery. Although it is a common occurrence, the production of such copies—*analog or digital*—often violates the terms of the license under which that print was acquired, which establishes a lease for the life of the print only, with no duplication permitted without the artist's permission. Even if this license does allow duplication, if the film was acquired in the predigital era, only a very generous reading of the contract would assume that this includes format shifting. The relatively low price of such prints—conventionally three times the laboratory cost—is tied to the restricted set of rights they offer. If an institution wishes to go beyond these rights, as is necessary to show work on loop in a gallery setting, it has a duty to clear permission with the artist or the estate and, if necessary, to renegotiate the terms of the license. Though this does not always occur, it should be recognized as best practice. The artist, of course, has the right to refuse and insist that the print may not be duplicated for exhibition, in which case it cannot be shown, at least outside of rare cinema screenings that will have minimal effect on its material integrity. It was this situation that led the Rose Art Gallery—owner of the original, uneditioned 1965 *EVE-RAY-FOREVER* reels used to undertake the restoration—to repurchase the work as edition six of six in 2011.

Retroactive editioning provides a way of according institutions the reproduction rights they want given current technological and exhibitionary conditions, and it provides artists a means of being remunerated for this greater latitude. But despite these advantages for both parties, this practice has one significant drawback for museums: it is very expensive. It is patently unfeasible for institutions to repurchase editions of all their uneditioned films. They habitually depend on artists to grant permission for them to take liberties beyond the license originally accorded with the sale of the uneditioned print so that exhibition copies may be produced, or, as often occurs, they simply proceed without asking. The ascendancy of retroactive editioning threatens to jeopardize this practice and put additional

constraints on the exhibition of historical experimental film in a gallery setting. Such is the double-bind of retroactive editioning: while it proposes a possible model for ensuring quality control, long-term preservation, and financial viability, it does so for a very limited number of artists and an even more limited number of works, at times in stark conflict with existing practices. While receiving significant criticism for the imposition of artificial scarcity, the Conner estate has successfully accomplished the artist's transition out of one model and into another, helped undoubtedly by his high stature and established reputation as an artist working in other, more traditional, media. But things remain much less certain for other filmmakers, even the most prominent. In its collision with the older practice of acquiring uneditioned prints, retroactive editioning makes abundantly clear the extent to which all editioning is more about rights and permissions than about the ownership of objects. But it also stands as perhaps the most potent symptom of the shifting institutional position of historical experimental film in the era of artists' moving image, the fate of which remains to be seen as the practice develops beyond its current, nascent stage.

Viewing Copies

Like any good manifesto, *Untitled #29.95* ends with a call to action. Over rephotographed footage of Barney's *Cremaster 5* (1997) the viewer is told that by going to the [®]ark website, www.rtmk.com, one can purchase "liberated" copies of limited-edition videos for only \$29.95. Viewers are also asked to send whatever "liberated videos" they may have in their own collections to the [®]ark website so they can be made available for free downloading.⁹⁰ The Robin Hood(s) of Chelsea, the maker(s) of *Untitled #29.95* plan to "steal video art from the rich and give it away for free, or at least for the reasonable cost of \$29.95." The viewer is advised, "Remember: video was meant to be a democratic medium." Since the release of *Untitled #29.95* in 1999, many works have indeed been "liberated," though not precisely as urged in the video's closing call-to-action. Alternative economies of circulation have emerged precisely as the limited-edition model has gained in popularity. Though *Untitled #29.95* proposes an intervention that would contest the way that videos are "held captive" by editioning, these unauthorized channels of circulation exist in parallel to the sale of

official editions. The circulation of editioned artworks on the Internet is exceedingly common, whether through illegal YouTube postings, DVD trading networks, or members-only BitTorrent sites. Many Bruce Conner films, for instance, continue to circulate on Karagarga as rips of the DVDs issued in 2002 and 2003. Artists frequently supply screeners of editioned works to curators and scholars that are neither a part of the edition nor a designated artist's proof. Through these unofficial channels interested individuals can access these works for their personal or professional use with no harm done to the official editions in the possession of galleries and museums. Without the signature or certificate—inscriptions imparting authenticity and uniqueness—a DVD copy is simply a DVD copy.

Rather than an overturning of the limited-edition model, Sven Lütticken has advocated for the growth of this parallel economy of distribution grounded in “viewing copies” that are distinct from collectible, certified copies.⁹¹ Lütticken notes that the viewing copy tends to circulate “confidentially and in semi-secrecy” rather than through official channels of distribution. Notably, these unsanctioned copies tend to be more common than official DVD releases. *Zidane: A 21st Century Portrait* (Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno, *Zidane: Un Portrait du 21^e siècle*, 2006) was issued as a mass-market DVD and as a limited edition of seventeen that paired a DVD of the film with rush footage from one of the seventeen cameras trained on Zidane throughout the football match, but this case is something of an exception. In an effort to come to terms with why this may be the case, Lütticken has speculated that “the emergence of over-the-counter viewing copy editions was halted not so much by fears that the ‘real’ work would be tainted artistically and/or financially, but by the fact that there was big money to be made from exclusive limited editions. Even if unlimited viewing copy editions do not threaten the aura of such gallery pieces, why bother with them when the returns are bound to be marginal at best, or, more likely, non-existent?”⁹²

Indeed, while in 1997 the David Zwirner Gallery had a waiting list for Stan Douglas editions priced in the six figures, a group show of uneditioned videotapes priced between \$20 and \$100 sold only five copies.⁹³ These uneditioned tapes do not promise the same return on investment as a Douglas edition might; issuing mass-market DVDs promises no lucrative financial returns, simply exposure to potentially less-than-favorable viewing conditions. However, in the case of artworks that do not rely on

substantial installation components, such viewing copies can serve as important resources for scholars, students, and educators. Even works that do rely on a particular spatial configuration can be relayed through forms of documentation that provide a secondary form of access to the work that clearly distinguishes itself as such. At present it remains difficult to teach contemporary artists' moving image because of the very limited availability of many of the most significant works produced since the early 1990s. If prominent commercial galleries wish to truly support this sector, ensuring that such works are available to students and scholars is of utmost importance. A promising gesture in this regard is the website of Candice Breitz, an artist represented by the blue-chip gallery White Cube but who took it upon herself to create an online portal for the display of her work. Breitz makes her multiscreen installations viewable in their entirety through a controlled interface that does not enable downloading and clearly frames the materials presented as documentation, while also including installation shots that allow the viewer to imagine how they would appear in a primary context.

In the meantime LUX, the London-based not-for-profit distributor of artists' moving image, has proposed another way of mediating between the exclusivity of the limited edition and the conviction that film and video are democratic media. LUX was founded in 2002 as an amalgamation of three predecessor organizations: the London Film-Makers' Co-operative, London Video Arts, and the LUX Centre. As such, it has a strong historical connection to the rental model of distribution and its focus on access, often taken to be antithetical to the practice of editioning. Yet LUX has not eschewed editioned works altogether. Director Benjamin Cook has said, "We realized a few years ago that [the cooperative] model was becoming increasingly anachronistic in terms of the market and the institutional art world, which is informed by the market. We really felt like we needed to rethink our position in relation to those things."⁹⁴ The result involved devising a novel compromise that acknowledges the financial and archival benefits of editioning while also insisting on the need to ensure availability and circulation.

Though LUX does not sell editioned works, it partners with artists and galleries to serve as a renter of editioned works, thereby forging a hybrid space between two otherwise separate modes of distribution. If, for example, a work is issued in an edition of three plus artist's proofs, one of those

artist's proofs will be deposited with LUX and be made available for rent. Although this model is suited only to single-channel works, it represents a true step forward in the attempt to find innovative solutions for collection and display. It preserves the cooperative spirit while making use of the benefits of the limited-edition model without succumbing fully to its fetishization of rarity. As Cook puts it, "We really believe that one thing about film and video, in its very nature, is that it needs to circulate and be seen. What we are trying to do here is to create a system that equally values the need for works to be sold in limited editions—in a way so that the institutional art world can understand the value of those works—and that has built in a respect for the fact that these are theatrical works that need to continue to circulate in the world."⁹⁵ If a work is acquired by an institution and then never seen again, its value—even understood in a strict market sense—will be compromised. It must be remembered that value is produced not only through scarcity but also through circulation. There is at times an assumption that the limited-edition model is fundamentally incompatible with other forms of distribution, whether the rental model, online streaming, or the publication of uneditioned DVDs. This, however, is emphatically not the case. Since the editioning model is essentially one of rights management, offering one set of rights to a collecting institution and another to a client, whether educational or private, who rents the work from a distributor, is perfectly feasible.

The example of LUX and its hybrid model is instructive: it speaks to the need to move beyond existing models to develop better and more sophisticated ways of collecting, preserving, and exhibiting the moving image. Commenting in 2010 on his 1979 proposal to sell experimental films as originals, Larry Jordan remarked, "I never thought that the exact idea I proposed in that article would be *the* idea, but I wrote the article to provoke those ideas. The mechanics were up for grabs."⁹⁶ Without a doubt the mechanics remain up for grabs today, at a time of tremendous technological change. The limited-edition model is now appearing online: in 2011 the platform Sedition (www.seditionart.com) launched as an online marketplace for limited-edition digital artworks, including videos, while in 2015 Daata Editions (www.daata-editions.com) followed suit, commissioning artists to make editioned works expressly for the platform. While Sedition's editions are large—between two thousand and ten thousand—and priced between £5 and £500, Daata Editions positions itself more closely in

line with art market conventions, with an edition size of fifteen and prices beginning at \$200 and extending to \$5,600, with the edition increasing in price in \$200 increments as it sells out, then doubling to \$5,600 for the final copy.⁹⁷ While the long-term viability of such initiatives remains to be seen, they are indicative of the ways in which new forms of digital reproduction are challenging traditional mechanisms for the distribution, sale, and exhibition of art. In translating established protocols of authentication and rarity into a digital media context, however, they equally point to the resilience and rearticulation of traditional practices in a changed media ecology. It is notable, for instance, that all purchases from both platforms are accompanied by certificates of authenticity, while Daata Editions specifies that each edition features a digital watermark ensuring copyright protection.

In the offline context, though initiatives such as *Matters in Media Art* have done crucial work in setting out guidelines for the acquisition and loans of media art,⁹⁸ a clearer set of best practices is necessary. There is still a considerable amount of trepidation and uncertainty concerning the sale and acquisition of media artworks, particularly to private collectors. Practices vary enormously across the sector, and transparency is sorely lacking. The narrative of the ascendance of the limited edition presented here is not one of unqualified triumph; when compared to painting, sculpture, and photography, film and video remain relatively unsalable. Yet the limited-edition model is increasingly hegemonic in artists' moving image, constituting a massive historical shift in the management of reproducibility and the meanings assigned to it.